



**TESTIMONY OF THE CONNECTICUT JUVENILE JUSTICE ALLIANCE
FOR THE JUDICIARY COMMITTEE**

APRIL 15, 2013

**CAUTION AND CONCERN ON PROPOSED H.B. No. 6703
AN ACT CONCERNING YOUTH VIOLENCE AND GANG ACTIVITY**

Senator Coleman, Representative Fox, and members of the Judiciary Committee, thank you for the opportunity to testify today. My name is Abby Anderson, I am the executive director of the Connecticut Juvenile Justice Alliance – a statewide, nonprofit organization working to reduce the number of children and youth entering the juvenile and criminal justice systems, and advocating a safe, effective and fair system for those involved.

Regarding H.B. 6703, the Alliance is generally in favor of any program that tries to keep youth out of the juvenile justice system. However, we are concerned because the language of this bill simply creates a way for CSSD to identify and "track" kids who are deemed to be at risk or already in the system. What this proposed legislation does not include is anything that would try to provide these at risk youth supportive services or programming to prevent possible delinquency or escalation. As I'm sure you are aware, Connecticut has been at the forefront and a national leader in juvenile justice reform, so this seems a little outside the philosophy that we have adopted in the state – instead of emphasizing the use of services that have proven successful and effective in preventing and decreasing delinquency, this bill appears to take on a more fear tactic-driven, "scared straight" approach.

Furthermore, this bill calls specifically for CSSD to create a pilot program, which looks to be beyond the scope of CSSD's responsibilities, and better suited for DCF, which has a prevention mandate, and/or local Youth Service Bureaus. Again, I stress that the Alliance is in favor of programs that seek to keep kids out of the system; however, we cannot expect to successfully do so if we are not ensuring the appropriate services are in place for those who are in the greatest need.

Thank you for your time and attention. I am happy to answer any questions you may have.

Alliance member organizations:

AFCAMP, Center for Children's Advocacy, Center for Effective Practice, CHDI Children's Community Programs, Connecticut Association for Human Services, Connecticut Legal Services, Connecticut Voices for Children, Connecticut Youth Services Association, Community Partners in Action, FAVOR, FSW, NAMI Connecticut and the Keep the Promise Coalition, Office of the Chief Public Defender, Office of the Child Advocate, RYASAP, The Tow Foundation, The Village for Families and Children